

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 LONDON 12768 131739Z

62

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 INR-07 L-03 ACDA-07

NSAE-00 PA-01 SS-15 PRS-01 SP-02 USIA-06 TRSE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4555

SECDEF

INFO USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USCINCEUR

CINCLANT

USLOSACLANT

USNMR SHAPE

C O N F I D E N T I A L L O N D O N 1 2 7 6 8

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MPOL' NATO, UK

SUBJ: UK DEFENSE CUTS

REF: /USNATO 4212

1. ROUTINE SOUNDINGS AT VARIOUS LEVELS OF MOD AND WITH FCO CONFIRM THAT MOD OFFICIALS HAVE NOT YET DECIDED SPECIFICALLY HOW TO ABSORB THE NEW 100 MILLION POUNDS CUT IN 1977/78. WE ARE TOLD NO SPECIFIC DECISIONS WILL BE MADE "BEFORE OCTOBER" AND SOME FINAL DECISIONS MAY NOT BE REACHED UNTIL LATER. WHAT IS CLEAR IS MOD DETERMINATION "VIGOROUSLY LAID DOWN BY MASON" THAT THE NEW CUTS MUST NOT MAKE INROADS INTO THE OPERATIONAL CAPABILITY OF UK NATO COMMITTED FORCES. THE HINT HAS BEEN MADE THAT DEFERRAL OF BUILDING STARTS AND OF TRANSFERS/CONSOLIDATIONS, POSTPONEMENT OF PROCUREMENT FOR HOUSEKEEPING NEEDS AND SOME POSTPONEMENT IN THE STARTING DATES FOR NEW PROJECTS TOGETHER WITH SOME FURTHER REDUCTIONS IN PERSONNEL (MAINLY CIVILIAN) WILL BE THE MEANS FOR CUTTING EXPENDITURE. THE WORD IS OUT LOUD AND CLEAR THAT MOD WILL  
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 LONDON 12768 131739Z

NOT MAKE ANY REDUCTION IN BRITAIN'S FRONT-LINE CONTRIBUT-

ION TO NATO.

2. WE BELIEVE MOD MAY NEED A LITTLE PRODDING AND SOME NUDGING TO GET IT "TO CONSULT" ON CUTS WHICH DO NOT IN BRITISH MINISTERIAL VIEW TOUCH DIRECTLY ON UK CONTRIBUTION TO NATO. CERTAINLY THE POINTS MADE IN REFTEL ARE MOST RELEVANT, BUT IT IS OBVIOUS HERE THAT MASON AND RODGERS "WENT THROUGH HELL" TO KEEP MOD SHARE IN NEWEST PUBLIC EXPENDITURE CUT DOWN TO 100 MILLION POUNDS. THEY STILL HAVE TO FACE THE PROSPECT OF A NOISY, TRUCULENT LEFT-WING OUTCRY AT THE LABOR PARTY CONFERENCE IN SEPTEMBER AT BLACKPOOL WITH THE CERTAIN KNOWLEDGE THAT THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY CONFERENCE THE FOLLOWING MONTH WILL TREAT DEFENSE ISSUES AS A MAJOR CONFERENCE TOPIC. THE CONSERVATIVES UNDOUBTEDLY WILL PUT DIFFICULT QUESTIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT STRESSING THE IMPACT OF CUMULATIVE DEFENSE CUTS ON BRITAIN'S DEFENSE CAPABILITY. THE LEFT WILL CONTINUE TO ATTACK THE GOVERNMENT CUTS AS "TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE" AND AS SUCH INJURIOUS TO THE LABOR PARTY'S SOCIAL PROGRAM BECAUSE THE LEFT-WING VIEWS DEFENSE SPENDING AT PRESENT LEVELS AS TOO HIGH. THIS YEAR WE CAN EXPECT THE LEFT-WING'S BARK TO HAVE A SLIGHTLY SHARPER BITE THAN HERETOFORE.

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## Message Attributes

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